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Packed

Lunches

EMPLOYED HOMEMAKER



Texas Agricultural Extension Service
The Texas A&M University System
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Acknowledgment

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PACKED LUNCHES

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A brown bag lunch is a real inflation fighter and time saver for employed homemakers. A pre-prepared meal eliminates the time and travel involved with going out to lunch and gives the working homemaker an opportunity to plan economical and nutritious foods.

Planning

Consider foods needed for the day when planning brown bag lunches. Include some from each of the basic four food groups—meat, milk, fruit-vegetable and bread-cereal.

Milk Group. Use cheese or cottage cheese in sandwiches and milk in cream soups. Also plan milk, either plain or flavored, as a beverage.

Meat Group. Meat is good for sandwiches, or in cold weather, for a hearty soup. Fried chicken is also a good choice for a brown bag lunch.

Fruit-Vegetable Group. Include a serving of fresh, whole or canned fruit or use it as part of a fruit-vegetable salad. Also include plain cooked vegetables or use fresh vegetables in salads, relishes, soups and casseroles.

Bread-Cereal. Bread is a must for sandwiches, of course, and plain rolls can be used with such food as fried chicken. Provide crackers to accompany such foods as soups and dips. For other items, use breads, desserts and chips that contain cereal.

Consider age, weight, type of work and the season when planning the amounts and kinds of food to be included in the lunch.

Young homemakers need about the same amount of nutrients, but fewer calories, as older homemakers. Overweight homemakers need fewer calories, but equal amounts of nutrients as others. The more strenuous the work, the more calories that are needed.

Seasonal Considerations

To save money, plan lunches to include foods that are in season. To make the meals more enjoyable, adapt them to suit the weather.

The supply and quality of fresh fruits and vegetables varies according to season. During certain times of the year, eggs and some meats are also scarcer and more expensive.

Brown Bag Menu

	Milk	Meat	Fruit- Vegetable	Bread- Cereal
Ham and cheese sandwich	X	X		X
Carrot and celery strips			X	
Apple			X	
Iced tea or hot coffee				

This brown bag lunch includes foods from the basic food groups.

In large cities, out-of-season fruits and vegetables are available almost year round, but at higher prices because they are hothouse grown or delivered over long distances. Such produce includes oranges, apples, bananas, tomatoes, lettuce and certain other green vegetables. If fresh berries, peaches, pears, grapes and melons are not purchased in season, they may have to be substituted with canned foods. Because they are seasonal, there is little danger of tiring of them, even if they are eaten daily.

The liberal use of fresh fruits and vegetables fits in perfectly with the type of lunch needed for hot weather. On hot days, the appetite is reduced and digestion is easily upset, so plan light and easily digested foods. Because the body loses a lot of fluid in an effort to stay cool, drink plenty of water. A thermos of lemonade, iced tea with lemon or some other fruit drink is particularly refreshing. Because people exercise less in hot weather, they need fewer calories and usually crave lighter foods. However, summer lunches should still supply enough protein, minerals, vitamins and calories to meet health needs.

Easy-to-prepare foods are more popular during the summer. Cold soups and fresh vegetables and fruits are favorites, as well as convenience foods such as canned puddings and Vienna sausage.

Cold weather stimulates appetites. Hot foods for lunch are welcome during winter and some people eat more heartily. Foods such as sausages, doughnuts and pies are good items. Use less expensive winter vegetables, such as baked sweet potatoes, as well as canned fruits, in place of unavailable fresh fruits.

Lunch Containers

Safety is the watchword in selecting a container for brown bag lunches. A paper bag is safe if the meal can be left at room temperature or if foods are stored in insulated containers for packing.

Foods that can be left at room temperature without insulation are:

Milk Group. Canned puddings; hard cheeses; unopened, purified process cheese spreads.

Meat Group. Canned potted meats, canned meat spreads, canned Vienna sausages, canned luncheon meats, jerky and canned fish such as salmon, sardines, shrimp, tuna; peanut butter and nuts.

Fruit-Vegetable Group. Canned, fresh or dried fruits, dehydrated soups, potato chips.

Bread-Cereal Group. Corn chips, crackers, bread.

Other. Jellies and jams.

Pack lunches only in paper bags that have been purchased for that purpose and don't use the bags more than once. Sacks used for carrying groceries may be contaminated with bacteria that cause food poisoning, such as salmonella from raw chicken.

Meals can also be packed in lunch boxes. Follow the same safety precautions used with paper bags. Another packing container is an insulated bag. In this case, frozen water in plastic cartons or reuseable ice packs can be used to keep food cold until lunchtime. Or, use thermos bottles to keep foods hot or cold. Small, wide-mouth thermos jars are good for soups, stews, chili and casseroles. If you do not have a thermos bottle, try wrapping a jar with several layers of newspaper, using string to tie it together.

Be sure foods are safe to eat before storing and serving them. Wash your hands before handling the food and clean the working areas and utensils used to prepare it. Also store food properly after it is purchased.

Packing Pointers

Time Savers

Buy fresh fruits that only require washing in preparation for lunch. And to avoid cooking, use vegetables such as tomatoes, carrots, cauliflower and peppers, that can be eaten fresh. Do not freeze raw vegetables. Use convenience foods, such as ready-to-serve meats, sliced cheeses, peanut butter and prepared sandwich fillings. Don't forget, you can use convenient supper leftovers, too.

Keep a variety of purchased breads on hand rather than making them from scratch. Also, provide assorted crackers and chips as bread alternates for a variety of taste and texture.

Select small containers of yogurt, fruits and puddings or single-serving cans of tuna, shrimp or salmon that can be packed in the lunch as purchased.

Make big batches of sandwiches ahead of time in assembly-line fashion and then freeze them. They will keep at least 2 weeks. For non-soggy sandwiches, spread softened butter or margarine evenly to the edge of each slice of

bread. Good fillings are meat, poultry, sliced cheese, cheese spreads, tuna and salmon salads, peanut butter, nut spreads and egg yolk mixtures. Pack frozen in lunch box.

Set aside areas in your refrigerator, freezer and cupboards for lunch box foods, wrappings and containers for quick lunch preparations.

To avoid the morning rush, pack lunch containers the night before and refrigerate, adding hot or frozen foods the next morning.

Buy beverages at work or pack small frozen cans of fruit or vegetable juice with your lunch. The cans will keep other foods cold, thaw and still be cold for lunchtime.

Money Savers

Buy large bags of potato chips, corn chips and pretzels and then rebag the contents into smaller plastic bags.

Instead of purchasing special containers, save plastic cartons for margarine, cottage cheese or yogurt and small jars for salads and other moist foods. Clean spice jars or leak-proof pill containers are good for salad dressings, catsup or mustard.

Cook double batches of foods for supper and on weekends and then save the extra food for your lunches.

Finally, buy products that give the largest amount of food for the money.

Lunch Items

Try these food items from the basic food groups for your brown bag lunch.

Milk Group. Whole milk, skim milk, sliced cheese, pasteurized process cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, cream soup.

Meat Group. Soup, stew, chili, casseroles, fried chicken, canned meat and fish, cold cuts, dried meat, jerky, hard-cooked eggs in the shell, peanuts, pecans, walnuts and cooked mashed beans.

Fruit-Vegetable Group. Fresh fruit—melon wedges, apples, bananas, pears, plums, berries; dried fruit—raisins, prunes, peaches, apricots, dates; fruit leather; fresh vegetables—cucumber slices, carrot strips, celery strips, green pepper strips, radishes, cherry tomatoes and tomato slices; canned vegetables; fruits and juices; pickles; jellies, jams and preserves.

Bread-Cereal Group. Quick fruit loaf bread, rye bread, hard rolls such as hero rolls, buns, cracked wheat bread, whole wheat bread, pumpernickel, melba toast, crackers and bread sticks.

Other. Cookies—brownies, oatmeal cookies; cakes—cupcakes, angel food cake, plain white cake, spice cake, fruit cake; pies—fruit turnovers, fruit pies; beverages—tea, coffee, hot chocolate.

Sandwiches

Try different kinds of bread to add variety to sandwiches. Select the bread to complement the filling, such as corned beef on rye bread, or a dried fruit filling on a quinoa loaf bread. Try one slice of white bread with one of dark bread.

When using salad-type fillings, cover the bread thoroughly with butter, margarine or cream cheese to keep the bread from becoming soggy.

Wrap sandwiches individually to prevent transfer of flavors and fillings. Wrap lettuce and sliced tomatoes separately. At lunchtime, they can be placed fresh and crisp in the sandwich.

Meat, Poultry and Fish Fillings

Bacon

- Bacon with prunes and hard-cooked eggs with mayonnaise
- Crisp chopped bacon mixed with cooked prunes and mayonnaise
- Crisp bacon with chopped chicken livers and cream to moisten
- Canadian bacon (fried) with Swiss cheese and dill pickle on rye bread

Beef

- Cold beef or veal roast, ground or chopped, with chopped celery, pickles and mayonnaise on white bread
- Veal minced finely with pickles, hard-cooked eggs and mayonnaise
- Cold beef, ground or chopped, with cabbage and raw carrots on white bread
- Dried beef mixed with cheese and horseradish on whole wheat bread
- Corned beef mixed with prepared mustard and mayonnaise on rye or whole wheat bread

Chicken

- Chicken, minced finely, with pickles, hard-cooked eggs and mayonnaise
- Chicken spread with guava jelly on white bread
- Chicken spread mixed with toasted almonds and mayonnaise
- Sliced cold chicken with cranberry jelly on white bread

Fish

- Salmon with chopped pickles or grated carrots, raw or hard-cooked eggs and mayonnaise
- Flaked fish with chopped cabbage and mayonnaise
- Tuna with chopped egg, onion, pickles and mayonnaise on white or whole wheat bread

Ham

- Ham, minced fine, with pickles, hard-cooked eggs and mayonnaise
- Cooked ham, ground with roasted peanuts and mayonnaise
- Sliced ham on rye bread with mayonnaise and lettuce leaf

- Ham salad—ground cooked ham with chopped celery, olives, hard-cooked eggs and mayonnaise on white bread
- Sliced spiced canned ham with mayonnaise and lettuce on white bread
- Deviled ham spread with mayonnaise and chopped raw cabbage on whole wheat

Lamb

- Cold lamb slices with mint jelly on whole wheat bread

Sausage

- Braunschweiger liver sausage, minced, with chopped canned mushrooms and mayonnaise
- Salami salad—ground cooked salami mixed with chopped celery, olives, hard-cooked eggs and mayonnaise on white bread
- Sausage with beans and mayonnaise

Variety Meats

- Sliced, canned tongue on buttered whole wheat bread spread with mayonnaise mixed with horseradish
- Deviled tongue spread with horseradish and mayonnaise
- Chopped ground liver with relish pickles, grated carrots or shredded cabbage and mayonnaise

Cheese Fillings

- Roquefort cheese spread on whole wheat bread with lettuce leaf
- American cheese ground with peanuts and softened with mayonnaise
- Cream cheese mixed with anchovy paste to taste on whole wheat or white bread
- Pineapple cheese spread with chopped pecans on white bread
- Cottage or cream cheese, chopped vegetables and salad dressing mixed together; sweet red pepper relish, horseradish, onion pulp or chopped nuts may be added for extra flavor
- Cheddar cheese, grated or finely cut, mixed with chopped onion, celery, relish or pickle and salad dressing
- Cottage cheese with minced green pepper and dried prunes, or some other chopped, drained, stewed or dried fruits; with chopped pickles, cucumber or beet; chopped apples and nuts; with parsley and salad dressing

Egg Fillings

- Egg salad- hard-cooked eggs with chopped onion, pickle, celery and mustard and mayonnaise
- Hard-cooked eggs and celery with pimiento and mayonnaise
- Sliced or chopped hard-cooked eggs with salad dressing
- Scrambled eggs with salad dressing

Peanut Butter Fillings

- Peanut butter mixed with mayonnaise and crisp bits of bacon on white bread
- Peanut butter mixed with green pickle relish on whole wheat bread
- Peanut butter with grated raw carrot, chopped peanuts or raisins mixed with mayonnaise
- Peanut butter and bananas
- Peanut butter with jelly or marshmallows or chopped dates, prune, pecans and lemon juice

Bean Fillings

- Mashed baked beans mixed with tomato sauce, chili sauce, catsup, chopped pickle or salad dressing; or with minced onion and salad dressing
- Chopped peanuts and baked beans, mashed

Vegetable Fillings

- Chopped cabbage, dried apricots and walnuts with mayonnaise or salad dressing
- Chopped cabbage and nuts; grated carrot with mayonnaise
- Grated carrot, minced celery, green pepper and chili sauce with mayonnaise or salad dressing
- Grated carrot, raisins or chopped peanuts with mayonnaise
- Chopped radishes, cucumbers and green pepper with mayonnaise
- Chopped water cress, cabbage and radishes with mayonnaise

Frozen Sandwiches and Fillings

Most sandwiches, when properly packaged, freeze satisfactorily. Sandwich fillings also can be frozen and take less space in the freezer than sandwiches. The frozen sandwich, however, saves last-minute preparation for brown bag lunches.

Sandwich fillings that freeze well are:

- Cheddar cheese or cream cheese
- Sliced or ground meat
- Sliced or ground poultry
- Fish
- Cooked egg yolk
- Peanut butter
- Nut pastes
- Olives and pickles

Fillings that contain raw vegetables, such as lettuce, carrots and tomatoes, and those with the whites of hard-cooked eggs, or fruit jellies, mayonnaise and salad dressing, do not freeze well. The vegetables lose their appetizing crispness and flavor, the eggs become tough and the other fillings make the sandwich soggy.

To prepare sandwiches for freezing, spread the inside of each piece of bread from edge to edge with softened butter or margarine. This keeps the bread from absorbing moisture.

Prepare the fillings from favorite recipes that have been adapted for freezing. Spoon into small jars or moisture/vapor-proof containers, leaving head space, and then freeze.

Wrap sandwiches as they will be used—one or two per package—in moisture/vapor-proof material. Label with the kind of filling and date and then freeze immediately.

Thaw fillings overnight in the refrigerator and use them as soon as possible. Thaw the sandwiches in their original sealed wrappings. A package of two sandwiches



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will thaw at room temperature in 3 to 3½ hours—just in time for lunch.

Store sandwiches 3 to 4 weeks; fillings, 3 to 6 months.

Sandwich Recipes

Basic Sandwich Fillings

¼ cup mayonnaise About 1 cup variation
½ cup chopped celery ingredients

Combine all ingredients. Chill. Makes about 1½ cups.

Meat or Poultry. Add 1 cup diced cooked ham, chicken, turkey, leftover roast or luncheon meat and if desired, ¼ cup chopped, drained pickle.

Seafood. Add 1 cup flaked tuna, salmon, crab meat or chopped shrimp sprinkled with lemon juice.

Egg. Add 2 hard-cooked eggs, chopped; 2 tablespoons chopped dill pickle; ½ teaspoon each of dry mustard, finely chopped onion and capers. Omit celery.

Beef Filling

1 cup cooked beef, cut up 1 tablespoon lemon juice
½ cup finely chopped celery ½ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons finely chopped onions 1/8 teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons sweet pickle relish, 1/3 cup mayonnaise
drained

Mix all ingredients. Makes 1½ cups or four sandwiches.

Chicken Salad Filling

2 cups cooked chicken, chopped 1/3 cup mayonnaise
(about 2½ pound fryer) ¼ teaspoon red pepper
2 hard-cooked eggs, grated ¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup chopped sweet pickle ¼ teaspoon black pepper
½ cup finely chopped celery

Mix all ingredients together. Serve as an open face or closed sandwich. Use a cookie cutter for interesting shapes. Makes about 2½ cups or 10 to 12 sandwiches.

Cream Cheese and Cucumber Filling

½ cup chopped cucumber 2 3-ounce package cream
1/8 teaspoon celery seed cheese
¼ teaspoon dill seed ¼ teaspoon salt

Combine chopped cucumber, celery seed, dill seed, cream cheese and salt. Makes 1 1/3 cups of filling, enough for seven sandwiches.

Cheese, Almond and Olive Filling

½ cup grated process cheese 2 tablespoons chopped ripe
¼ cup slivered or chopped toasted olives
almonds 1/3 cup mayonnaise
Dash of pepper

Combine cheese, almonds, olives, mayonnaise and pepper. Makes ¾ cup or enough for four sandwiches.

Pimento Cheese Filling

1 cup mild cheese, grated 1 teaspoon minced onion
1 5-ounce jar pimento cheese spread ½ teaspoon hot sauce
1 3-ounce package cream cheese ¼ teaspoon paprika

Mix ingredients together until well blended. Chill. Makes about 1¼ cups or enough for six sandwiches.

Cheddar Cheese Filling

8 ounces or 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese	1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 tablespoons prepared mustard, Chinese style	1/4 teaspoon sugar
	1/4 cup yogurt

Mix cheese, mustard, cayenne and sugar using electric mixer, until well blended. Stir in yogurt just to blend. Chill. Makes 1½ cups or enough for eight sandwiches.

Hero Sandwich

1 hero roll	1 slice bologna
Butter or margarine	1 slice salami
1½ tablespoons mayonnaise	1 slice American cheese
2 tablespoons mustard pickle relish	2 slices tomatoes
2 lettuce leaves	2 slices onion
1 slice boiled ham	

Split the roll. Spread the cut sides with a thin layer of butter to prevent the sandwich from becoming soggy. Spread one side with mayonnaise and the other side with relish. Cover both halves of the roll with lettuce. On the bottom half, add the remaining ingredients. Cover with the top half of roll.

Baked Bean and Sausage on a Bun

1/3 cup baked beans	1 slice of bologna sausage
1 teaspoon chopped onion	Pickle slices
½ tablespoon mayonnaise	1 to 2 teaspoons mustard
Butter or margarine	Bun, split

Mash beans until very fine. Add onion and mayonnaise. Spread a thin coat of softened butter or margarine on the cut side of each half of bun. Spread mustard on the cut side of one piece. Spread with bean mixture and top with slice of sausage and pickle slices. Cover with the other half of the bun.

Salads

Vegetable Salad

1 cup fresh cauliflower buds	1½ tablespoons prepared mustard, Chinese style
1 cup bean sprouts, canned, drained	
½ cup sliced fresh mushrooms (optional)	½ cup olive oil
	½ cup salad oil
½ cup water chestnuts, thinly sliced	1 teaspoon salt
½ cup shredded cabbage	Cracked pepper
¼ cup chopped green onions	½ cup red wine vinegar

Mix all the vegetables together. Put remaining ingredients in a covered jar. Shake to blend. Add to vegetables and toss. May be refrigerated for several days. Makes eight to 10 servings. For brown bag lunch, put serving in small, wide-mouth thermos bottle.

Hot Beef and Vegetable Stew

1½ pounds boneless stew beef, 1 inch cubes	1½ cups carrots, cut in chunks
2 tablespoons fat or oil	6 small onions
3 cups water	2 teaspoons salt
1 bay leaf	¼ teaspoon pepper
3 cups potatoes, quartered	¼ cup flour, unsifted
	1/3 cup water

Brown meat on all sides in fat in a large, heavy saucepan. Add 3 cups water and a bay leaf. Cover tightly. Simmer about 2 hours or until meat is tender. Add vegetables and seasonings and continue cooking, covered, for about 25 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Remove bay leaf. Stir flour into 1/3 cup water until smooth. Stir flour mixture gently into stew; continue stirring only as needed to prevent sticking as stew thickens. Makes six servings.

Apple Salad

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| 1 red apple, cored and chopped | 3 tablespoons mayonnaise or
enough to bind |
| 1 16-ounce can mixed vegetables | 1 teaspoon prepared mustard |
| 1 small dill pickle, chopped | Salt and pepper to taste |

Combine all ingredients in bowl and toss lightly to mix. Cover and chill several hours or overnight. Makes two or three servings. Put in small, wide-mouth thermos bottle for the brown bag lunch.

Soups

Gazpacho (Cold Soup)

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| 2 ripe tomatoes, peeled | 2 tablespoons olive oil |
| 1 cucumber, peeled | 1½ tablespoons vinegar |
| ¼ cup diced green pepper | Dash of hot sauce |
| ¼ cup diced onion | Garlic salt |
| 1 cup canned tomato juice | Salt and pepper to taste |

Chop tomatoes and cucumbers. Add remaining ingredients. Chill. Pour in wide-mouth thermos to keep cold. If a blender is available, mix all ingredients together in the blender. Makes four to six servings.

Canadian Cheese Soup (Hot Soup)

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| 2 tablespoons butter or margarine | Pinch of soda |
| ¼ cup finely diced onion | ½ cup processed cheddar
type cheese, grated |
| ¼ cup finely diced carrot | Salt and pepper to taste |
| ¼ cup finely diced celery | 1 tablespoon parsley, finely
chopped or ½ teaspoon dried
parsley flakes |
| 2 tablespoons flour | |
| 2¼ teaspoons cornstarch | |
| 2 cups chicken broth | |
| 2 cups milk | |

Melt butter or margarine in soup kettle. Add onions, carrots and celery and saute over low heat until soft. Add flour and cornstarch and cook until bubbly. Add broth and milk and make a smooth sauce. Add soda and cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Add parsley or parsley flakes. Makes about four to five servings. For the brown bag lunch, put into small, wide-mouth thermos bottle.

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Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, The Texas A&M University System and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914. 20M — 3-82, Reprint

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